



Grab Quick and Easy Snacks

Target Audience

Parents and caregivers

Behavior Objectives

Parents and caregivers who participate in this activity will be able to:

- Identify six foods they would prepare in advance to eat as snacks, that are fruits, vegetables, or whole-grain foods.
- Commit to at least one action to choose and eat fruits, vegetables, or whole-grain foods as snacks.

Lesson Overview



20-MINUTE ACTIVITY!

Allow extra time if there are more than 10 participants

Optional: **Play the Power Panther music** as parents gather.

- As an activity opener, parents stand up to talk about their snack habits, and what they think are healthy snacks. The discussion includes a review of how snacks fit into the MyPyramid food groups.
- Each parent receives the *Grab Quick and Easy Snacks* brochure. Using the brochure and the related poster, parents explore snacks they could eat from the food groups that are fruits, vegetables, or whole-grain foods. Then they come up with ways to snack smarter themselves and to encourage their children to make healthy snack decisions.
- Parents brainstorm about personal and family snack choices. Identify ways to make healthful snacking easy.
- At the end of the session, parents will write at least one action that they will take in the next week to select fruits, vegetables, or whole-grain foods when they make snack choices. Each parent uses the *Grab Quick and Easy Snacks* brochure to write down the actions they plan to take.

By making wise snack choices, adults can fit more fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods into their plans for healthful eating.

Materials

- **Optional: Download the Power Panther song to a CD.** Arrange to play it at the beginning of the session.
www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/Collection/collect_kids_3.html
- **Make nametags. Use the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ round sticker** to decorate them.
www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/Collection/collect_kids_2.html
- **Hang the *Grab Quick and Easy Snacks* poster.** Obtain it in advance from:
www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/collection/tools_posters.html
- **Provide copies of the *Grab Quick and Easy Snacks* brochure.**
Download it from the web at:
http://www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/collection/Files/snacks_brochure.pdf
- **Download and make copies of MyPyramid mini-poster (8 ½ x11")** for each participant. www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MiniPoster.pdf
- **Bring pencils** for parents to use.

For a bilingual or Spanish-language session, you can order Spanish versions of the *Grab Quick and Easy Snacks* poster and brochure.

To order: www.ntis.gov/usda/orderfns.aspx



Background Information for Leaders

Use this information to guide your snack activities with parents. It is not meant to be presented directly to them.

Snacks count as part of the total calories consumed in a day. Be aware of your snacking habits – what you eat and how much. The challenge to snacking is to make smart choices without eating too much. Eat to satisfy hunger, but not for emotional reasons (boredom, stress, loneliness), or just because food is around (habit).

As mini-meals, snacks can help people of every age – **kids and parents** – eat the kinds and amounts of foods recommended for them by MyPyramid. Snacks can include foods that might also be part of regular meals. Wise snack choices can help you get the fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods you need.

Can snacks, that are higher in fat, added sugars, or calories, fit in? It is okay to eat these foods now and then. However, be smart with snacks. 1) Consider “how often” you eat snacks high in added sugars, fats, or calories. 2) Try choosing another version with less fat or added sugar. For example, try baked chips instead of regular chips, or choose a bagel instead of a doughnut. 3) Be sensible about “how much” you are eating. 4) Put the snack on a plate, rather than eating it from the package. This will help you avoid eating too many snacks without realizing it.

Choose the amounts of snacks you eat by considering how physically active you are. Active people need more food than inactive people. If you sit more often than you move, you may need to limit snacks. Try taking a walk, or doing something else active before having a snack. Just being active may postpone the desire for a snack.

Parents play an important role in helping their children learn to make wise snack choices. Children learn by watching. Parents can help kids pick healthful snacks. Parents can: 1) plan ahead and provide healthful snacks; 2) keep easy-to-fix foods for snacks within easy reach; and 3) offer fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods for parties, special events, and family celebrations.

Teaching Activities

1. Optional: **Set a lively tone** by playing the Power Panther music as parents gather and fill out their name tags.
2. **Start** by referring to the poster *Grab Quick and Easy Snacks* to help focus on snacks in this session.
 - **To get people involved, ask:** Stand if you ate a snack 1) in the last 2 or 3 hours, 2) sometime today, 3) in the last 2 or 3 days, 4) this week. By this time, everyone is likely standing.
 - Now that they are standing, have them move to the place that describes their snacking. Designate the areas in the room as: “Fruit & Vegetables as Snacks,” “Grain Foods as Snacks,” “Other Foods as Snacks” and “Food Combinations as Snacks.”
 - **Ask** them to sit and ask: What do you think makes a snack? What food groups are represented by the snacks you named? (Fruits? Grains? Meat?)
 - **Briefly review** the five food groups in MyPyramid.
 - **Point out:**
 - Snacking is a good way to fit fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods in your daily food choices. Snacks count toward the total amount of food you need from the five MyPyramid food groups in each day.
 - Snacks that are higher in fat and added sugars can be eaten now and then. Just eat them in smaller amounts, and not all the time.
3. **Encourage** parents to think about their snack habits. Then, brainstorm ways they could improve the snack choices.
 - **Ask:** Why do you snack? What is a typical snack for you? Why do you choose that food? Keep the discussion open-ended so they talk freely and everyone gets to share his or her thoughts about why they snack, and what they snack on.



Teaching Activities (continued)

- As a group or in pairs, come up with remedies for common snack challenges they name, such as “I snack ...”:
 - “When I’m stressed at home or at work.”
 - “When I’m bored, waiting, or not sure what to do next.”
 - “As I watch TV or spend time on the computer.”
 - “Because it’s the social thing to do with other people.”
 - “When snack foods are around. They’re hard to resist.”
 - “Even when I’m not even thinking about it. Snacking is mindless eating.”
 - “When I’m hungry.”
 - **Brainstorm:** For each snacking situation named, have the group come up with two or three ideas to address the snacking challenge in a healthful way.
 - **Use this** as a chance to talk about:
 - *What they would snack on:* Try replacing high-calorie snacks with those that have fewer calories. Encourage snack choices that include fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods.
 - *How much they would snack:* Paying attention to “how much” of a food they snack on can help them cut back. Point out the importance of considering “how much” they eat compared to how often they move. If they are very active often, they may be able to eat more food as snacks.
 - *What they might do instead:* Do something active instead of snacking to relieve stress, boredom, or loneliness.
- 4. Distribute** the *Grab Quick and Easy Snacks* brochure. Review the brochure. It explains some reasons why snacks can be part of healthful eating.
- **Point out:** As you choose foods throughout a day, be aware of what foods and how much you eat for snacks from each food group. Then you will know how your choice for snacks helps you get the kinds of food and amounts recommended for the day.
 - **Have the parents look** at the suggestions for quick, easy, and healthy snacks in the brochure. Have them choose two snacks they might pick from the ideas in the brochure, as:
 - Snacks you could eat at work.
 - Snacks for you to eat at home.
 - After-school snacks for your children.
 - **Ask:** Why did you pick those snacks? Did everyone make the same choices? What food groups did their snacks come from? How might snacks help you eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains? What else might you add to this “quick and easy snack list”?

Teaching Activities *(continued)*

5. **Using the brochure again**, sum up ways to be prepared to make healthy choices, if you need a snack.
 - **Explain:** The brochure also offers simple ways to make snacks fun, tasty, and healthy.
 - Set a good example by making healthy choices when you need a snack.
 - Plan ahead by buying fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain snacks.
 - Have these healthy choices on hand instead of relying on the snack choices found in a vending machine.
 - Start a new trend by offering fruit or vegetables and whole-grain snacks for special events and celebrations.
6. **Give parents time** to plan some actions they might take to make smart snacking choices a regular habit for themselves and their family:
 - **Pass out the pencils.**
 - **Ask:** During this next week, what can you do to make better snack choices for yourself, and for your family?
 - **Encourage** parents to think again about their own snack habits and snack choices. Ask what steps they might take to make sure they and their families make healthy snack choices.
 - **Explain:** The brochure *Grab Quick and Easy Snacks* has a place to list some snacks. Think about the smart snack ideas the group just came up with.
 - **Encourage** the parents to commit to at least one action they will take to make fruits, vegetables, or whole-grain foods as a snack. Parents can write the actions on the brochure and take it home.
 - **Reinforce** by referring to the *Grab Quick and Easy Snacks* poster and by saying: “Now that you know some steps to make smart snacking easy, and some quick snack ideas, you know what actions you can take to make smart snacking a habit for yourself and the entire family.”



Talk to Parents One-on-One...

If you have time, here is an individualized approach you might want to use.

Often talking with parents one-on-one allows for more personalized advice. Discuss information of interest to them, including what steps they can take.

- 1. Find out** what parents do, and want to know, about snacks for themselves and their kids. Ask:
 - How would you rate your overall snack choices?
(Good? Fair? Need Help?)
 - What gets in the way of making better snack choices? Or what makes it easy for you to choose healthy snacks in the right amounts?
 - What could you do to make healthier snack choices?
 - What would you like to learn that could help you make healthier snack choices?
- 2. Share information** related to what parents want to know.
 - Go over the messages in the *Grab Quick and Easy Snacks* brochure. Focus on what parents said they would like to learn about snacking.
 - Reinforce the importance of setting an example for their children by making healthy snack choices themselves. Point out that having fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods available makes it easier to choose them when you are hungry.



- 3. Help parents set a realistic goal and actions** for snacking. Ask:

- What goal could you set to make fruits, vegetables, or whole-grain foods available as snack choices? Guide them so their snack goals are realistic. Have them write only one or two actions on the back of the *Grab Quick and Easy Snacks* brochure.
- What steps can you take to meet your snacking goal? Help the parents choose specific actions, such as putting yogurt or low-fat cheese within easy reach in your refrigerator where their child can reach them. Have them write their ideas on the brochure.
- Once you have taken these steps to make smart snacking a habit, how can you take more steps to a healthier you?

Encourage parents to make these new actions a habit. Each action moves you closer toward a healthier you, and a healthier family.

At-Home Activities

If you have more time, these are some extra activities you might do.

- **Snacks to Go ...** Give parents a copy of the *Pack Your Snacks & Go* activity sheet. Encourage them to have the ingredients on hand for the Snack Mix recipe, and for one of the snacks in the crossword puzzle. Then set aside time to make those snacks with their child. Have kids complete the activity sheet.
To view and download the *Pack Your Snacks & Go* activity sheet:
www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/collection/kids_activity.html
- **The Snack Spot ...** Encourage parents to choose easy-to-reach places in their kitchen: on the counter, or a shelf in the refrigerator or cabinet, that is set aside for snacks. Have them stock the kitchen with foods that are ready-to-eat, such as, baby carrots, celery sticks, whole-wheat crackers, pretzels, peanut butter, and individual applesauce containers. The family can help decide what to have on hand. Use Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ graphic art to remind everyone where the snacks are stored. Use a Power Panther image and have the kids write a quote about snacks. Put the quote in a cartoon-text bubble near the Power Panther's head.
Clip art is available on-line. To download:
www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/Zone/clipart.html

Community Activities

- **Snack Stand ...** Sponsor a snack stand at a school or community event, featuring smart snacks. Display the poster “Grab Quick and Easy Snacks.” Put some easy finger-food snacks, including grapes and pretzels, in plastic bags. You could sell whole-wheat crackers, apples, oranges, pears, bananas, mini carrots, cucumber circles, bell pepper strips, cherry tomatoes, and celery sticks with some chilled yogurt dip.
- **Longest Veggie Sandwich! ...** Organize a fun, fund-raising snack concession and get a lot of attention for fruits and vegetables and whole-grain foods. Help parents or student groups sell slices from a 12-foot or longer sandwich that is layered with veggies, different types of lettuce, tomato slices, bell pepper slices, cucumber slices, zucchini slices, mushrooms, pineapple slices, etc. Ask your school food service or a local bakery to put the loaves of whole-wheat bread together to make a long sandwich. Put Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ stickers on the sandwich wrapper for each customer.
The stickers are available on-line to download:
www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/collection/collect_kids_2.html

Useful Resources

- **Additional Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Resources**

www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard

- **Additional Team Nutrition Resources**

www.fns.usda.gov/tn

- **Additional Federal Government Resources**

General and specific nutrition information is available from:

www.nutrition.gov

- **The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion/USDA**

Find out about the MyPyramid Food Guidance System

www.mypyramid.gov

- **The Food and Nutrition Information Center/USDA**

Child Nutrition and Health Web sites

www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/etext/ooooo8.html

We want to hear from you! Share your success stories with the Food and Nutrition Service by sending news clippings, photos, and event descriptions to: eatsmartplayhard@fns.usda.gov

